



Town of Groton, Connecticut

Meeting Minutes

Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road
Groton, CT 06340-4394
Town Clerk 860-441-6640
Town Manager
860-441-6630

Mayor Heather Bond Somers, Councilors Dean G. Antipas, Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Karen F. Morton, Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Rita M. Schmidt, James L. Streeter, and Harry A. Watson

Tuesday, January 22, 2013

6:00 PM

Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1

REGULAR MEETING

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Somers called the meeting to order at 6:04 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Somers, Councilor Antipas, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Morton, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Schmidt and Councilor Watson
Members Absent: Councilor Streeter

Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.

3. Calendar and Communications

Councilor Antipas noted receipt of e-mails regarding reuse of Noank School.

4. Approval of Minutes - None

5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

None.

6. NEW BUSINESS

2013-0005 Joint Meeting with Board of Education (2013 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Kirsten Hoyt and Bob Peruzzotti of the Board of Education were present. Mayor Somers noted that Mr. Peruzzotti has indicated that he would like to talk to the Council about potential reuse of Fitch Middle School.

As an aside, Mayor Somers noted that the first meeting of the School Facilities Initiative Task Force is scheduled for January 29th at 7:00 p.m.

Ms. Hoyt explained that the Board's Finance and Facilities Committee has discussed several organizations that are interested in using Fitch Middle School. Parks and Recreation is already using a portion of the school. The uses are pushing the limits of what is being done under the maintenance contract. The Board of Education will meet on January 28th at 7:00 p.m. to discuss those issues. Mr. Peruzzotti suggested that the reuse of Fitch Middle School should be a joint venture with the Town. The Board of Education cannot afford to close it. There have also been discussions about moving the central office to the school. Ms. Hoyt noted that the facility is still under the control of the Board of Education so requests for use should come through the Board. She noted that the Board has developed a new policy on use of facilities. Town or school related uses take priority and they are covered under the Board's insurance policy. Outside agencies will have to provide insurance. All inquiries for use of the facility should be directed to Bill Robarge, Director of Buildings and Grounds.

2012-0246 Pending Claim

A motion was made by Mayor Somers, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that the members of the Town Council, together with Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Town Attorney Eileen Duggan, go into

executive session at 6:15 p.m. pursuant to Connecticut General Statutes §1 200 (6) (B) for the purpose of discussion regarding a pending claim (grievance, demand for legal relief and/or notice of an intention to initiate an action with a state administrative agency).

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 7:30 p.m.

2013-0018

Flanders Road Utility Installation - Future Bond Referendum Potential

Discussed

The Town Manager explained that the Town Council had previously authorized additional funding to conduct additional research into crossing I-95 with utilities if they are extended up Flanders Road.

Virgil Lloyd of Fuss and O'Neill provided a handout for the Council. He reviewed a general map of the study area. The original study covered the extension of water and sewer to the Flanders Road area. Mr. Lloyd noted a close up of the project area and buildable lot area. Fuss and O'Neill has updated costs for the project and looked at the I-95 crossing details, permitting, and project phasing. Mr. Lloyd reviewed a sewer/water segment breakdown. For the I-95 crossing, water and sewer would hang under the bridge between the girders supporting the bridge. The design has been coordinated with DOT. Mr. Lloyd provided an updated opinion of cost broken down by each segment for both sewer and water, including soft costs. The total project cost is estimated at \$16.9 million. The handout also included an engineering drawing with a cross section of one of the I-95 bridges showing where water and sewer would be installed.

Gary Schneider, Director of Public Works, noted that water line extension costs were also updated with Groton Utilities.

Mr. Lloyd noted that the project would start from the south, connecting into existing sanitary sewer, and progress north.

Councilor Peruzzotti asked about lifecycle costs for the pump stations. Mr. Lloyd noted that those costs were calculated in the original study when the preferred alternative was identified.

Councilor Flax questioned the purpose of the utilities extension and the potential use of benefit assessment. Mr. Schneider noted that property owners could be benefit assessed for the sewers, but there is a large section of land owned by the Town of Groton. Benefit assessments will not cover the cost of the project. There is existing water up to the Mystic Weigh Subdivision. The City of Groton does not want to benefit assess. Levies would be placed on the properties for their share of constructing the water line.

Town Manager Mark Oefinger noted that from the Council's perspective this is an economic development issue. The Town has tried to open up some of this land going back to the 1960s. Most recently, business owners on Flanders Road approached the Council about extending utilities. Mr. Lloyd clarified that Groton Utilities would like to extend water lines to Rogers Road and install a water tower as part of a long term plan, but that extension is not required for this project. The sewer segment along Route 1 is the most expensive route, but an overland route associated with a proposed development is no longer possible.

Councilor Schmidt asked if the condition of the I-95 bridges has been assessed. Mr. Lloyd stated that DOT inspects the bridges and there are no issues with these bridges.

Councilor Watson suggested that legislators be approached for funding. He asked about the potential for increasing the tax base and the Town Manager noted that such an assessment has not been done for this project and it would depend on what gets built.

Mayor Somers thanked Mr. Lloyd and noted that the Council will consider the information and review the history of the project. The Town Manager suggested putting this item on a future agenda or having a special meeting and inviting the business owners that were advocating for the project.

2013-0021 Refunding Prior Years' Bonds (Part 1)

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, noted that the Town refunded bonds in November 2011, resulting in significant cost savings. This proposal involves refunding bonds issues in 2006, 2007 and 2009. Mr. Pandolfo reviewed a chart showing the estimated savings. The Town will not know actual savings until the bonds are sold. If approved, this item will go to the RTM for expedited consideration.

A motion was made by Councilor Schmidt, seconded by Councilor Morton, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0022 FYE 2013 Contingency Transfers - Wage Adjustments

Discussed

Sal Pandolfo, Director of Finance, explained that the budget normally includes wage increases for various unions. When the FYE 2013 budget was adopted, it did not include wages for a number of the groups. This request is for a General Contingency Transfer of approximately \$168,000 to cover wage increases. Transferring the money before development of the FYE 2014 budget will provide a better comparison for budget requests. If approved, this item will go to the RTM for expedited consideration.

A motion was made by Councilor Peruzzotti, seconded by Councilor Watson, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0011 Revised Position Descriptions (2013 Standing Referral)

Discussed

Doug Ackerman, Director of Administrative Services, presented a number of job descriptions for consideration. He noted the recognized need for an Assistant Town Manager. With the departure of the Manager of Labor Relations and Risk Management, there was an opportunity to look at the structure of Administrative Services and the Town Manager's office and split responsibilities in a different way. A proposed Director of Human Resources/Risk Management position would be the head of a separate department. The Director of Administrative Services would become the Assistant Town Manager and have responsibility for Information Technology and Emergency Management/Communications. No new positions are created. The Coordinator of Risk and Emergency Management takes advantage of the synergy between Emergency Management and Risk Management.

Town Manager Oefinger noted that the Town Council and RTM have been supportive of an Assistant Town Manager position, but he did not feel comfortable creating a position in light of cutbacks. In other organizations, there is a direct relationship between emergency management and the Town Manager's Office. This proposal takes advantage of some potential opportunities without creating a new position.

The Manager Utilities Division position was created after attempts to recruit for the position vacated by Carl Almquist were unsuccessful. This position is more overall management and less operational in nature.

The Recreation Supervisor - Marketing and Events position description places an emphasis on

marketing, special events, working with the community, and advocacy. The position reports to the Director of Parks and Recreation.

The Foreman - Transfer Station position addresses a vacancy created by Stacy Leitch's promotion. The previously proposed Working Leader position was not acceptable to the union. This position oversees all operations at the transfer station. Councilor Flax questioned the need for a full-time position. Mr. Ackerman noted that it is not a vacant position. It is currently filled and at the same pay level as the previous Solid Waste Coordinator position.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Antipas.

The motion carried unanimously

2013-0015

Setting 2013 Rates for Shennecossett Golf Course and Approving Revised Regulations for Parks and Recreation Facilities

Discussed

Mark Berry, Director of Parks and Recreation, reviewed the request to approve the 2013 Golf Course rates. The proposed rates were reviewed and approved by the Golf Advisory Board and Parks and Recreation Commission. There is no increase in season pass rates. Weekend and weekday twilight rates will be reduced by \$3.00. The 9-hole weekend rates after 12:00 will be reduced by \$7.00 and the 9-hole weekday rate after 12:00 will be reduced by \$3.00. There is no change to the golf cart rates. Mr. Berry noted that when rates increased last year, there was a decrease in the number of season passes sold resulting in a loss. The proposed rates reflect a desire to be more competitive with local courses. The strategy is to boost vacant playing times and fill empty slots by aggressive marketing, e-mail blasts, and other methods.

Mr. Berry reviewed proposed changes to the rules and regulations.

A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.

Councilor Flax expressed concern with making a direct connection between the increase in fees and the loss of revenue. Todd Goodhue, Golf Pro, noted that there is normal attrition but an increase in revenues usually accompanies a rate increase. The course already charges 10% more for morning play. Mr. Goodhue projects that the decrease in rates will be offset by an increase in rounds. Councilor Antipas asked if it is a problem marketing a large menu of choices and Mr. Goodhue noted that the times are standard in the golf world. Mr. Goodhue noted that overall, the golf course revenues are up. Mayor Somers asked about opportunities to offer packages with the restaurant. Mr. Goodhue responded that Par 4 is run by an independent concessionaire.

The motion carried unanimously

2012-0175

FYE 2014 Budget Process

Discussed

The Town Manager reminded the Council that the FYE 2014 budget is being developed. If Councilors want any specific expenditures included, they should notify the Town Manager since there will be no encumbered funds to address things that may come up during the year. In the past, these items have included OpSail, America's Cup, the Police Study, and the Mystic Arts Center Parking contribution.

Mayor Somers noted that the Council must be more intentional about setting funds aside. She has had a meeting with the Arts Center and downtown Mystic merchants. The merchants are looking for the Town to help offset parking costs in the coming years for the Labor Day through Memorial Day time period. Other potential projects include another OpSail effort, management studies, and BRAC. Councilor Flax suggested that the Council could add money to Contingency. The Town Manager suggested that if projects and costs are known, it is better to include them in the budget. Mayor Somers asked for suggestions by next Tuesday, January 29th.

2012-0050

Potential Disposition of William Seely School Property

A motion was made by Councilor Johnson, seconded by Councilor Watson, to enter executive session at 8:48 p.m. to discuss 2012-0050 Potential Disposition of William Seeley School and to invite the Town Manager to attend.

The motion carried unanimously

Discussed

The executive session concluded at 9:08 p.m.

7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List

None.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

None.

9. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:10 p.m.